

MICHEL DE MONTAIGNE
ESSAYS



Front Matter

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The Author to the Reader

READER, loe-here a well-meaning Booke. It doeth at the first entrance fore-warne thee, that in contriving the same I, have proposed unto my selfe no other then a familiar and private end: I have had no respect or consideration at all, either to thy service, or to my glory: my forces are not capable of any such desseigne. I have vowed the same to the particular commoditie of my kinsfolkes and friends: to the end, that loosing me (which they are likely to do ere long) they may therein finde some lineaments of my conditions and humours, and by that meanes reserve more whole, and more lively foster the knowledge and acquaintance they have had of me. Had my intention beene to forestall and purchase the worlds opinion and favour, I would surely have adorned my selfe more quaintly, or kept a more grave and solemne march. I desire therein to be delineated in mine owne genuine, simple and ordinary fashion, without contention, arte or studie; for it is my selfe I pourtray. My imperfections shall threin be read to the life, and my naturall forme discerned, so farreforth as publike reverence hath permitted me. For, if my fortune had beene to have lived among those nations, which yet are said to live under the sweete libertie of Natures first and uncorrupted lawes, I assure thee, I would most willingly have pourtrayed myselfe fully and naked. Thus gentle Reader my selfe am the ground-worke of my booke: It is then no reason thou shouldest employ thy time about so frivolous and vaine a subject. Therefore farewell. From *Montaigne*, the first of March 1580.